

STREAMING MEDIA PLAYERS

INTRODUCTION

More media files are stored on PCs than ever. Unfortunately, most PCs live in studies and bedrooms and not in the sitting room, where most people like to listen to music or watch films. Media receivers get around this problem by wirelessly streaming audio and video files from your PC to your TV and hi-fi.

In this Labs test, we've looked at a range of streaming media receivers that can play audio and video content sent across your network. We've looked at six audio-only receivers and six audio and video receivers, each of which plays various media formats and has its own special features. Over the next few pages, we'll guide you through the possibilities and pitfalls of media streaming, and help you pick the right receiver to release media from your PC.

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FULL STREAM AHEAD

You don't have to be in the same room as your PC to enjoy its media files. These 12 receivers let you enjoy music and films around your home from just £83 including VAT

Choosing a... Streaming Media Player

Streaming media receivers allow you to play all the media files stored on your PC in other rooms around your house, whether you fancy watching a film on the TV in your sitting room or listening to your favourite tracks on the stereo next to your bed.

The choice of receivers and the wildly varying specifications can be bewildering, so you should consider your current TV or hi-fi setup and the types of media files you already have. Your choice should depend on the types of file you wish to play, the type of equipment you'll be attaching the receiver to, and even the media player you prefer using on your PC.

INTERFACE FACTS

First, consider what your media receiver will be plugged into. There are two main types of media receiver: those designed to play back audio, and those that can play back audio and video, which we will call multimedia receivers. Most audio receivers have stereo phono outputs to connect to a standard hi-fi, while many also have 3.5mm mini-jack sockets for headphones or PC speakers. Multimedia receivers have a variety of outputs. If you have a modern LCD TV, look for a component or HDMI output; CRT TV owners are better off with an RGB SCART connection.

FORMAT WARS

You also need to consider which file types the receivers support. Almost all the audio receivers here can play the most common formats (MP3, WMA, AAC and Wav), while many can also handle lesser-known file types such as OGG and the lossless FLAC format.

Video support on multimedia receivers is trickier. For example, the Apple TV combines an outstanding user interface with support for High Definition Video files, but you can only play media types supported by iTunes (MPEG4 and H.264 video and MP3 and AAC audio). Also, if you buy media files online, whether in iTunes' Protected AAC or Microsoft's WMA-DRM format, you need to make sure your media receiver can play back protected files.

Only three of the multimedia receivers in this round-up can play High Definition video, and these are predictably among the most expensive in the group. HD video is typically encoded as either WMV-HD or H.264, but only Netgear's EVA8000 can play both formats. You can see a full list of supported formats in our table on page 136.

No single streaming media receiver is capable of playing all media formats, so your best option is to buy one that supports your favourite format and use

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software to transcode any remaining video files into it. You can find out how to do this in next month's *Shopper*, as we will be doing a feature specifically about video codecs.

As well as being able to play files stored on your PC, all the audio receivers can connect to internet radio stations, and some of the multimedia receivers can connect to YouTube.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

It's important to know how and where you're going to use your receiver before you buy it. All but one of the receivers here can connect to a wireless network, which cuts down the number of cables strewn around your home, but wireless signals can be unreliable. This is most likely to create problems with HD video streaming, which can be jerky if your signal is weak.

Audio receivers are perfectly suited to wireless networking, and most have integrated speakers, so you can use them anywhere. Sonos's unique ZonePlayer system creates its own secure wireless network designed to link multiple Sonos receivers under the control of a single remote, and it works best with multiple receivers in several rooms.

SERVING TIME

Most of the media receivers here cannot store files, but instead play them from a server. You can get network-attached storage (NAS) devices

Around the Block Setting up SMB

Using Server Message Block to share media files has advantages over UPnP. To set it up:

1 In Windows XP, right-click the folder you want to share and select the Sharing and Security option from the menu. Under Network sharing and security, click the 'If you understand...' tab, select 'Just enable file sharing' and click OK. Then tick the 'Share this folder on the network' option. If you want your receiver to be able to write files, click 'Allow network users to change my files'. Then click OK and you're done.

2 Windows Vista is a little different. Open the Control Panel and then open the Network and Sharing Center. Under Sharing and Discovery, click on 'Password-protected sharing' and select 'Turn off password-protected sharing'. Then click Apply.

3 Right-click the folder you want to share and click Share. Select Everyone from the drop-down menu and click Add. Under Permission Level, click the black triangle next to the Everyone line and select Co-owner from the list. Finally, click Share.

that are capable of acting as media servers, but it's usually simpler to use your own PC to serve music and video files across a network. Some receivers come with their own server software, but most will work with either Universal Plug and Play (UPnP) or Server Message Block (SMB) network file sharing.

You may already have UPnP media server software on your PC in the form of Windows Media Player 11. If you have an earlier version of Media Player, you'll have to upgrade to the latest version. Unfortunately, it doesn't have built-in support for formats such as OGG, H.264 or MP4, and it was unable to index and stream them

even after we installed the correct DirectShow plug-ins from www.wmplugins.com.

Lack of support for all required formats is a problem common to many UPnP server programs, so we're pleased to see more network media receivers supporting SMB. This shares files between devices on a network. When a receiver is connected to a PC with SMB, it lists all the files it can play, rather than just those supported by a UPnP server. Unlike UPnP, you don't need to have server software running, as the capability is built into Windows. In the box above, we explain how to set it up. Mac and Linux users can create SMB shares using the Samba server software.

STREAMING AUDIO RECEIVERS

REVO Mondo Wi-Fi

★★★★

£100 inc VAT

From www.advancedmp3players.co.uk


Revo's Mondo Wi-Fi is a wireless internet radio and streaming media receiver. It can stream audio files from a UPnP streaming server, access your SMB network shares and connect to over 10,000 internet radio stations via the Reciva portal. The SMB compatibility is particularly useful, as you aren't restricted by the file formats supported by your UPnP server software. However, you can browse only one SMB share at a time, and must scan for files every time you change directory.

The Mondo is one of the smallest, least expensive audio receivers here. Although it has an alarm clock and sleep timer, it doesn't have an internal speaker, so it isn't too practical as a bedside clock radio. Its only ports are stereo phono sockets and a 3.5mm headphone jack. Volume adjustments only affect the headphone socket. Five buttons on top of the receiver are all you need to configure and use it, but the basic remote control has extra buttons to store presets, skip tracks and edit queues.

Strangely, the receiver couldn't connect to our wireless network until we enabled AES WPA encryption on our router as well as TKIP WPA encryption, and it lost its connection more frequently than most other receivers in the group.

This affordable receiver has support for a wide range of audio formats, including OGG, AAC and RealAudio. The Reciva internet radio service is great, and SMB support makes the Mondo Revo even more flexible. Sadly, due to its unreliable wireless networking and lack of an Ethernet port, we can't recommend it unless you're on a tight budget.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Inexpensive
- ✓ Can access SMB shares
- ✗ Unreliable wireless networking

STREAMING AUDIO RECEIVER 1x stereo phono output, 1x mini-jack headphone output, supports WMA, AAC, OGG, Wav, MP3 audio
PART CODE MondoWiFi
DETAILS www.revo.co.uk

TANGENT Quattro Mk2

★★★★

£164 inc VAT

From www.empiredirect.co.uk


Tangent's Quattro earned four stars in last year's gadget guide (*Labs, Shopper* 239) for its internet radio capabilities. The Mk2 replaces the original and adds an FM tuner, Ethernet port and WPA2 wireless support.

The Quattro Mk2 doesn't have a remote control, but it does have a full set of controls on its face. The retro styling is supposed to look expensive, but the plastic control knobs feel cheap, and the wood-grain-effect case isn't as attractive as that of the more expensive gloss versions of the Quattro. The small screen makes it difficult to scroll through long lists of files, but this is easier to do with the Quattro's knobs than with the tiny buttons of the cheaper Mondo.

Sound quality was good, but lacked the warm, rounded tones of Roberts' WM201. It's impossible to mute the sound using the volume knob, which was annoying. The lowest setting is quiet, but not inaudible.

The Quattro's wireless network connection was fairly strong, although not quite as stable as that of the WM201. Its greatest problem is that it cannot be connected to any network that doesn't give it access to the Reciva internet radio portal. This means that it won't work at all if you don't have an internet connection, or if you're behind a firewall that blocks port 5000.

Tangent's Quattro Mk2 has good sound quality and works well enough, but its inability to connect to a network without an internet connection is a problem. We prefer Roberts' WM201, although it is a slightly more expensive streaming audio receiver.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Full controls on main unit
- ✓ Good sound; can access SMB shares
- ✗ Requires internet access

STREAMING AUDIO RECEIVER 1x mini-jack line output, 1x mini-jack headphone output, supports WMA, AAC, OGG, Wav, MP3 audio
PART CODE QUATTRO-11165
DETAILS www.tangent-audio.com

ROBERTS WM201

★★★★★

£199 inc VAT

From www.advancedmp3players.co.uk


Roberts is a manufacturer with a 70-year history of making radios. The WM201 is a versatile streaming audio and internet radio receiver, which supports both wired and wireless network connections. Its manual was extremely helpful. As well as being able to access files shared by a normal UPnP server, the WM201 can access SMB network shares, so you aren't limited by the formats supported by your UPnP server software.

As well as a wide range of non-DRM-protected audio formats, the WM201 supports the most popular internet radio stream formats, including RealAudio. It can also access on-demand services such as those used by the BBC. It comes programmed with around 10,000 radio stations from around the world. To add others, you have to register online with the Reciva internet radio portal.

It can be time-consuming to scroll through songs and stations on the three-line LCD display, although it's larger than most in the group, and the basic remote control can be uncomfortable to use for long periods. The WM201's internal speaker sounds amazing, with deep bass tones and crystal clear audio at even the highest volumes.

The WM201 can do everything you're likely to need from an audio streamer or internet radio, is easy to use and has great audio quality. Logitech's Squeezebox has more outputs, so is better for connecting to a hi-fi, but the WM201 is ideal if you want a simple receiver to sit on your bedside table.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Excellent audio quality
- ✓ Can access SMB shares
- ✗ Expensive; uncomfortable remote

STREAMING AUDIO RECEIVER 1x mini-jack line output, 1x mini-jack headphone output, supports WMA, AAC, OGG, Wav, MP3 audio
PART CODE WM201
DETAILS www.robertsradio.co.uk

PHILIPS Streamium WAC3500D

★★★★

£230 inc VAT

From www.laskys.com


Philips' Streamium WAC3500D is the only streaming audio receiver here with an internal hard disk. As well as connecting to your wired or wireless network, it can rip and encode CDs to MP3 format, read files from a USB drive and play music from a docked iPod. Its speakers produced rich, powerful bass tones, but the mid-range was murky.

Its menu system was slow and unresponsive, and froze frequently, requiring us to switch off and restart the device. The manual is difficult to read, but Philips' Media Manager software was easy to install and use. You're given the option to update the firmware to enable internet radio after you've registered the Streamium online. Once you've installed the update and set up an account on Philips' website, you can listen to internet radio from the BlueBeat, Live365 and RadiolO services, and add your own selection of stations.

The hard disk's 80GB capacity provides plenty of room for high-quality MP3 files, and we could encode MP3s straight to the disk. It was simple to copy encoded files to a USB drive or over the network to our PC.

The Streamium has some great features, but is awkward to use due to its tiny screen and unstable interface. If all you want is a media receiver buy the Squeezebox, and if you need speakers Roberts' WM201 has better sound quality.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Can encode to hard disk
- ✓ Lots of features
- ✗ Poor menu interface; expensive

STREAMING AUDIO RECEIVER 1x mini-jack headphone output, supports WMA, AAC, MP3 audio
PART CODE WAC3500D
DETAILS www.philips.co.uk

LOGITECH

Squeezebox Duet

★★★★★

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

£280 inc VAT

From www.superfi.co.uk

Logitech's Squeezebox Duet consists of a receiver with stereo phono and coaxial and optical S/PDIF outputs, and a remote control with a colour screen. The remote is a separate wireless device in its own right, which can communicate with both the SqueezeCenter server software installed on your PC and the receiver. Squeezebox products aren't compatible with UPnP, iTunes or SMB shares, but its open-source SqueezeCenter server software works under Windows, Mac OS X and Linux.

It was easy to set up on our wireless network, and the server software found music easily. The controller's iPod-style interface and scroll wheel makes it easy to select tracks and connect to podcasts and internet radio. The Duet supports lots of online music services, most of which offer free trial subscriptions, and it can access archive.org's free Live Music Archive.

With both the controller and receiver connected wirelessly, there was sometimes a couple of seconds' delay between pressing the button to pause or skip tracks on the handset and the Squeezebox receiver responding. The controller can be used to control multiple receivers, but we found controlling more than one receiver unreliable and nowhere near as easy to set up as the more expensive Sonos kit.

The intuitive user interface makes this receiver a joy to use, and its high-quality speakers sound excellent. It's pricier than most streamers here, but the flexibility of the wireless remote control makes it a pleasure to use, and a Best Buy.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Supports wide range of formats
- ✓ Excellent interface
- ✗ Expensive

STREAMING AUDIO RECEIVER 1x stereo phono output, 1x coaxial S/PDIF output, 1x optical S/PDIF output, supports WMA, AAC, OGG, Wav, MP3 audio
PART CODE 930-000034
DETAILS www.slimdevices.com

SONOS

ZonePlayer ZP80 with Controller 100

★★★★★

£429 inc VAT

From www.simplysonos.co.uk

Sonos's ZonePlayer is the most expensive receiver here, and the one best suited to large, multi-room setups. We've reviewed the most basic bundle, which includes a ZonePlayer 80 receiver and a remote control unit. Any Sonos receiver, once connected to a router, creates its own secure wireless network, which lets you connect to and control up to 34 additional ZonePlayer receivers around your house. Each can play different tracks or act as part of a group playing the same content streamed from the internet or a local server. They're all controlled with a wireless remote with a scroll wheel and a 3½in colour screen to list music and internet radio stations.

The ZonePlayer comes with its own Desktop Controller server software for Windows. It played all our test files, including unusual formats such as OGG and FLAC. It comes with a selection of preset internet radio stations, including all the BBC channels, and you can add more using the Desktop Controller. It also comes with a free one-month subscription to Napster's Music on Demand service, which lets you download or stream music from the internet without a PC.

The ZonePlayer system is flexible and easy to use, but very expensive. It's a great system for streaming music into multiple receivers but, unless you have a large house and deep pockets, the Squeezebox is a better buy.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✓ Supports wide range of formats
- ✗ Very expensive

STREAMING AUDIO RECEIVER 1x stereo phono output, 1x coaxial S/PDIF output, 1x optical S/PDIF output, supports WMA, WMA-DRM, AAC, OGG, Wav, Audible, MP3 audio
PART CODE U040069
DETAILS www.sonos.com

SOLWISE
DMP-1120w

★★★★

£83 inc VAT

From www.solwise.co.uk

Solwise's DMP-1120w is the cheapest video receiver here. It's a neatly designed white box with component, composite and SCART video outputs and stereo phono and optical S/PDIF audio outputs. There's also a USB port and a built-in card reader to play media files directly from Secure Digital, Memory Stick, MultiMedia Card and CompactFlash cards.

It doesn't support as many media formats as other receivers in the group. It can play MPEG1 and MPEG2, DivX and XviD video files, but not MPEG2 VOB or WMV. High Definition Video and the H.264 codec aren't supported. It supports MP3, Wav and AAC audio, but can't handle WMA files, let alone OGG or FLAC. Setup was easy, though. Our UPnP server immediately showed up over a wired network connection, and connecting to our wireless network went without a hitch.

It makes a fair job of video playback. Its menu is easy to use, but file lists were slow to load and navigate, and its remote control is poorly designed. Fast-forwarding through files was a slow process with buffering delays. Many files we couldn't skip or fast-forward through at all, including MPEG4-encoded AVI files. It also wouldn't remember where we'd got to in a video file.

The DMP-1120w supports most common TV connection standards and plays a range of video formats, but we were frustrated by its slow interface and limited control of playing videos.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Inexpensive
- ✗ Limited format support
- ✗ Slow, unresponsive interface

STREAMING MULTIMEDIA RECEIVER 1x stereo phono output, 1x optical S/PDIF output, 1x SCART output, 1x component output, 1x composite output, supports Wav, MP3 audio, MPEG1, MPEG2, MPEG4 AVI, MPEG4 MP4 video
PART CODE DMP-1120w
DETAILS www.solwise.co.uk

NEUROS
OSD

★★★★★

£139 inc VAT

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BUDGET BUYFrom www.advancedmp3players.co.uk

Neuros's OSD is a sleek black box. It can't handle High Definition Video or files encoded in the H.264 format, but it supports almost every other format and is easy to use. It can read and write to memory cards and USB drives, as well as to SMB shares on a networked PC or network-attached storage device. It's the only streamer here without wireless, so you'll have to use a wireless bridge or a cable to connect to your network.

The OSD has 3.5mm A/V sockets for video input and output, and two composite and twin phono audio-to-SCART converter boxes. There is no manual. Instead, you are referred to comprehensive online documentation.

For recording, the OSD can control your digital TV box via an infrared transmitter, which can mimic a digital box's remote control. Programming it to do this is time-consuming, as you have to point your remote at the OSD and press each key when prompted. Once it's set up, the OSD can turn your TV receiver box on and off and change channel to record TV. Recordings can be up to 2GB in size. Our 640x480dpi MPEG4 recordings had reasonable picture quality.

The OSD uses an open-source operating system, and an active community means advice and new features are easily available. It isn't perfect, and won't suit those who want HDMI ports and support for HD video, but it did a better job of recording video and controlling our digital box than Archos's TV+.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy to set up and use
- ✓ Good format support
- ✗ Minimal documentation

STREAMING MULTIMEDIA RECEIVER 1x stereo phono output, 1x composite output, supports WMA, AAC, OGG, Wav, MP3 audio, MPEG1, MPEG2, MPEG4 AVI, MPEG4 MP4 video
PART CODE OSD
DETAILS www.neurostechnology.com

D-LINK DSM-510

★★★★★

£153 inc VAT
From www.kikatek.com



D-Link's DSM-510 streaming multimedia receiver earned four stars in *What's New, Shopper* 242, so we've brought it back to compare with the competition. This receiver looks more like a router than part of a home entertainment system, but it's easy to set up and its interface is easy to use. It works with any UPnP streaming server, including Media Player 11.

Video played through the DSM-510's HDMI socket looked great but, as it doesn't have a SCART socket, users with CRT televisions must make do with low-quality composite video. It has a wired Ethernet port and 802.11g wireless; 720p High Definition Video streamed smoothly over both connections. The DSM-510 can play WMV-HD videos, but it can't handle the H.264 video format, which is often used to encode HD video files. We had no problems playing any other standard format test files.

The receiver doesn't have as many extra features as other multimedia receivers here. You can't use it to listen to internet radio, browse the web or watch YouTube videos. We'd also have liked to see support for SMB shares as well as UPnP streams.

If you just want to play back content from a server, this is one of the best multimedia receivers here, with excellent visual quality and a smooth interface. It's only let down by its lack of support for H.264 video. If you want a High Definition receiver with support for WMV-HD and H.264, buy Netgear's EVA8000. Otherwise, the DSM-510 is an excellent-value alternative.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Simple interface
- ✓ Easy to set up; WMV-HD support
- ✗ No H.264 support

STREAMING MULTIMEDIA RECEIVER 1x stereo phono output, 1x optical S/PDIF output, 1x HDMI output, 1x composite output, supports WMA, WMA-DRM, OGG, Wav, MP3 audio, WMV, WMV-HD, MPEG1, MPEG2, MPEG2 VOB, MPEG4 AVI, MPEG4 MP4 video
PART CODE DSM-510
DETAILS www.d-link.co.uk

ARCHOS TV+ 80GB

★★★★★

£160 inc VAT
From www.pixmania.co.uk



Archos's TV+ is among the most expensive multimedia receivers here, but it does have an 80GB hard disk for TV recordings and storing video, audio and image files. Setting it up is tricky. Instead of SCART outputs, it has component video and stereo phono plugs and comes with two messy SCART breakout cables. It also has HDMI, S-video and composite ports.

The menu system is fairly clear, and connecting to our UPnP server was easy. It had no problem playing our test audio and video files over the network or from its hard disk, but it doesn't support HD video. To get H.264 and MPEG2 support, you must buy £15 plug-ins from Archos.

To make timed TV recordings, you must register on Archos's website for a free one-year subscription to a TV listings service. Its built-in infrared transmitter can change the channel of a digital box, but only if it's right in front of it. This worked with our Sky box, but not our Freeview receiver.

The TV+ can surf the web, but only if you spend another £20 on the Opera plug-in. The odd remote control has a wobbly joypad and a keyboard, which works fairly well when navigating webpages.

The TV+ was easy to connect to our UPnP server and has some useful features, but it's overpriced. We were disappointed by the lack of HD support and patchy control over digital boxes. Spending another £50 to enable web browsing and H.264 and MPEG2 support is also a bit much. There are less-expensive, better-featured receivers here.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Plenty of features; easy to set up
- ✗ Expensive
- ✗ Useful plug-ins cost extra

STREAMING MULTIMEDIA RECEIVER 1x stereo phono output, 1x coaxial S/PDIF output, 1x HDMI output, 1x component output, 1x S-video output, 1x composite output, supports WMA, WMA-DRM, AAC, Wav, MP3 audio, WMV, MPEG1, MPEG4 AVI, MPEG4 MP4 video
PART CODE 500969
DETAILS www.archos.com

NETGEAR EVA8000

★★★★★

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

£188 inc VAT
From www.lambda-tek.com/componentsshop



This is the only receiver here that can play H.264 and WMV-HD files. It has a full set of video outputs, including SCART, composite, component and HDMI, plus surround-sound support through optical or coaxial S/PDIF.

It was frustrating to set up. It comes with Netgear's Digital Entertainer software. This is supposed to make installation easy, but the software couldn't open the necessary ports in our router's firewall or detect the receiver. The manual includes a list of the ports the receiver uses, so you need to open the ports manually in your router's configuration page.

Our initial scan for SMB network shares was time-consuming, but after they'd been located it didn't take long to index the files. We enabled Folder Browsing in the Advanced Settings menu to make it easier to use.

Once we had it working properly, we found plenty to like. You can access content from YouTube, Flickr, internet radio stations and podcasts, and the Digital Entertainer software lets you play Protected AAC or WMA-DRM files via iTunes and Windows Media Player. It can be controlled through a well-designed web interface and can set timed recordings on your PC, as long as you have a compatible TV card.

The EVA8000 was tricky to set up, but it was easy to use and had good audio and video quality. It also supports a wide range of formats. It's a Best Buy.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Excellent format support; HD
- ✓ Full range of ports
- ✗ Tricky setup; annoying software

STREAMING MULTIMEDIA RECEIVER 1x stereo phono output, 1x coaxial S/PDIF output, 1x optical S/PDIF output, 1x SCART output, 1x HDMI output, 1x component output, 1x S-video output, 1x composite output, supports WMA, WMA-DRM, AAC, Protected AAC, Wav, MP3 audio, WMV, WMV-HD, MPEG1, MPEG2, MPEG4 AVI, MPEG4 MP4 video
PART CODE EVA8000-100UKS
DETAILS www.netgear.co.uk

APPLE Apple TV 40GB

★★★★★

£190 inc VAT
From www.play.com



The Apple TV is a Mac in a very small box. It feels hot when it's running, but this didn't cause any problems during tests. It can play High Definition Video, but supports only MPEG4 and H.264 encoded video with an AAC audio track. It can't record TV, despite its 40GB hard disk. Unlike the other video receivers here, it didn't come with any of the cables we needed to connect it to our TV. It has HDMI and component video outputs, along with stereo phono and optical S/PDIF outputs for audio.

It works only with iTunes, and picked up our wireless network immediately. With the Apple TV and our PC connected to the same network, it was easy to turn the PC into an iTunes server. The Apple TV gave us a five-digit code that we could enter into iTunes on the PC to sync or stream from it. When you first select a computer the Apple TV copies all your media to its own hard disk, which can take a long time. You can choose to stream only from the PC rather than copy over its content.

The menu interface looks stunning, and the iPod-style remote control is simple to use, although its volume control doesn't work. The Apple TV can display photos from Flickr and play YouTube videos, but wouldn't let us store our favourites unless we had a YouTube account.

It is easy to use, but its lack of support for common formats rendered much of our collection unplayable. The EVA8000 supports a wider range of formats, including H.264 and WMA-HD.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy to use; attractive interface
- ✗ No included cables
- ✗ Limited format support

STREAMING MULTIMEDIA RECEIVER 1x stereo phono output, 1x optical S/PDIF output, 1x HDMI output, 1x component output, supports AAC, Protected AAC, Wav, Audible, MP3 audio, H.264 video
PART CODE MA711B/A
DETAILS www.apple.com/uk

STREAMING MEDIA PLAYERS

MANUFACTURER	COMPUTER SHOPPER BEST BUY						COMPUTER SHOPPER BUDGET BUY				COMPUTER SHOPPER BEST BUY	
	REVO	TANGENT	ROBERTS	PHILIPS	LOGITECH	SONOS	SOLWISE	NEUROS	D-LINK	ARCHOS	NETGEAR	APPLE
Model	Mondo Wi-Fi	Quattro Mk2	WM201	Streamium WAC3500D	Squeezebox Duet	ZonePlayer ZP80 with Controller 100	DMP-1120w	OSD	DSM-510	TV+ 80GB	EVA8000	Apple TV 40GB
Rating	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Media streamer type	Streaming audio receiver	Streaming audio receiver	Streaming audio receiver	Streaming audio receiver	Streaming audio receiver	Streaming audio receiver	Streaming multimedia receiver	Streaming multimedia receiver	Streaming multimedia receiver	Streaming multimedia receiver	Streaming multimedia receiver	Streaming multimedia receiver
AUDIO COMPATIBILITY												
Audio MP3 playback	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Audio WMA playback	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Audio WMA-DRM playback	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Audio AAC playback	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Audio Protected AAC playback	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Audio OGG playback	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Audio Wav playback	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Audio Audible playback	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Other audio formats	AIFF, AU, Real	AIFF, AU, Real	AIFF, FLAC, Real	None	AIFF, Apple Lossless, MP2, MusePack	AIFF, Apple Lossless, FLAC, HE-AAC	None	G.726, FLAC	AIFF	None	FLAC, WMA Pro	AIFF, Apple Lossless
Internet radio stream compatibility	MP3, WMA, Real	MP3, WMA, Real	MP3, WMA, RealAudio	MP3, MP3Pro, WMA	MP3, OGG, WMA	MP3, WMA	MP3	None	None	None	MP3	None
VIDEO COMPATIBILITY												
Video MPEG1 playback	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Video MPEG2 playback	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Video MPEG2 VOB playback	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Video MPEG4 AVI playback	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Video MPEG4 MP4 playback	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
MPEG4 video DivX/ XviD support	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
MPEG4 video H.264 support	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
MPEG4 video MP3 audio support	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
MPEG4 video AAC audio support	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Video WMV playback	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Video WMV-HD playback	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Other video formats	None	None	None	None	None	None	MJPEG	H.263, MOV (QuickTime 6)	DVR-MS	None	MOV (QuickTime)	Protected H.264
Internet video stream compatibility	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	FLV (YouTube)	None	FLV (YouTube)	FLV (YouTube)	FLV (YouTube)
IMAGE COMPATIBILITY												
Image BMP support	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Image JPEG support	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Image TIFF support	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
NETWORK INTERFACES												
Wired network ports	None	1x 10/100	1x 10/100	1x 10/100	1x 10/100	2x 10/100	1x 10/100	1x 10/100	1x 10/100	1x 10/100	1x 10/100	1x 10/100
Wireless networking support	802.11b/g	802.11b/g	802.11b/g	802.11b/g	802.11b/g/n	Proprietary	802.11a/g	None	802.11g	802.11g	802.11b/g	802.11b/g/n
Wireless encryption support	128-bit WEP, WPA, WPA2	128-bit WEP, WPA, WPA2	128-bit WEP, WPA, WPA2	128-bit WEP, WPA, WPA2	128-bit WEP, WPA, WPA2	N/A	128-bit WEP, WPA, WPA2	N/A	128-bit WEP, WPA, WPA2	128-bit WEP, WPA, WPA2	128-bit WEP, WPA, WPA2	128-bit WEP, WPA, WPA2
AV INTERFACES												
Audio outputs	1x mini-jack headphone, 1x stereo phono outputs	1x mini-jack line, 1x mini-jack headphone outputs	1x mini-jack line, 1x mini-jack headphone outputs	1x mini-jack headphone output	1x stereo phono, 1x coaxial S/PDIF, 1x optical S/PDIF outputs	1x stereo phono, 1x coaxial S/PDIF, 1x optical S/PDIF outputs	1x stereo phono, 1x optical S/PDIF outputs	1x stereo phono output	1x stereo phono, 1x optical S/PDIF outputs	1x stereo phono, 1x optical S/PDIF outputs	1x stereo phono, 1x optical S/PDIF outputs	1x stereo phono, 1x optical S/PDIF outputs
Video outputs	None	None	None	None	None	None	1x SCART, 1x component, 1x composite outputs	1x composite output	1x HDMI, 1x composite outputs	1x HDMI, 1x component, 1x S-video, 1x composite outputs	1x SCART, 1x HDMI, 1x component, 1x S-video, 1x composite outputs	1x HDMI, 1x component outputs
Other connectors	None	FM radio antenna, mini-jack auxiliary input	None	USB, stereo phono input, FM antenna socket, iPod dock	None	Stereo phono inputs	USB, CF, MS, MMC, SD card reader	USB, CF, MS Pro/Duo, Microdrive, MMC, SD card reader, S-video input, composite video input, stereo phono input	USB	USB, composite/component/S-video/stereo phono inputs	USB	None
PHYSICAL												
Dimensions including antenna	48x130x179mm	111x210x145mm	115x300x190mm	230x515x230mm	35x165x115mm	74x136x140mm	50x233x130mm	32x140x140mm	42x150x125mm	37x250x164mm	38x432x254mm	28x197x197mm
Antennas	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	0
Internal/external antennas	External	Internal	External	External	Internal	Internal	External	N/A	External	Internal	External	Internal
Detachable antennas	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Power consumption standby	1W	4W	6W	19W	2W	4W	7W	1W	0W	5W	7W	17W
Power consumption on	2W	10W	6W	24W	3W	4W	11W	1W	1W	15W	11W	22W
SERVER COMPATIBILITY												
Server software included	None	None	None	Philips Media Manager	SqueezeCenter	Sonos Desktop Controller	None	None	None	Archoslink (download)	Netgear Digital Entertainer	iTunes (download)
UPnP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
iTunes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
SqueezeCenter	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
SMB	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
BUYING INFORMATION												
Price including VAT	£100	£164	£199	£230	£280	£429	£83	£139	£153	£160	£188	£190
Warranty duration and terms	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB	One year RTB
Supplier	www.advancedmp3players.co.uk	www.empiredirect.co.uk	www.advancedmp3players.co.uk	www.lasys.com	www.superfi.co.uk	www.simpsonsonos.co.uk	www.solwise.co.uk	www.advancedmp3players.co.uk	www.kikatek.com	www.pixmania.co.uk	www.lambda-tek.com/componentshop	www.play.com
Details	www.revo.co.uk	www.tangent-audio.com	www.robertsradio.co.uk	www.philips.co.uk	www.slimdevices.com	www.sonos.com	www.solwise.co.uk	www.neuros-technology.com	www.d-link.co.uk	www.archos.com	www.netgear.co.uk	www.apple.com/uk
Part code	MONDOWIFI	QUATTRO-11165	WM201	WAC3500D	930-000034	U040069	DMP-1120W	OSD	DSM-510	500969	EVA8000-100UKS	MA711B/A

Labs verdict Streaming media players

With a couple of exceptions, all the media receivers here were easy to set up to stream media over a network. However, a couple of audio and a couple of video receivers really stood out.

Among the audio receivers, Roberts' WM201 is easy to use and has a high-quality, built-in speaker. It's great if you want a standalone internet radio and streaming audio receiver that doesn't need any extra peripherals. It was beaten to the Best Buy award by Logitech's Squeezebox Duet. This sounds amazing with a good set of speakers connected, and its wireless handset provides a simple interface that doesn't require you to scroll through your entire music collection three lines at a time.

It was harder to pick the best multimedia streamer. Some, like the Apple TV, have excellent picture quality and logical interfaces but only support a handful of formats. In the end, two were worthy of awards. Our budget choice is Neuros's OSD, an open-source receiver with loads of features and good format support, although its video quality and variety of outputs can't match some of the more expensive players. Our favourite, however, is Netgear's EVA8000. It was a bit of a challenge to set up, but once it was running we were blown away by the quality and range of its video support, which even includes the most popular HD video codecs. It's a Best Buy. **ES**

STREAMING AUDIO RECEIVERS

LOGITECH

Squeezebox Duet

★★★★★



STREAMING MULTIMEDIA RECEIVERS

NEUROS

OSD

★★★★★



NETGEAR

EVA8000

★★★★★

